

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 204-A]

224
[201] animal with his knife or spear. He claps his arm-
pit to signal his success to his companions. The
women by the tone of their shouting and the
men by their arm-clapping (KiBira: *kombo*) can
indicate not only when and where game is put
up, but the kind of game.

In a day's hunting this process may be repeated as many as seven times, if the rain holds off. But if the first few casts of the nets are successful the Pygmies return to camp. They make no provision for the storage of meat or any other food.

If large game, such as buffalo, is driven toward them, the Mbuti try to lower the nets to avoid their being damaged; otherwise, the buffalo will probably tear its way through, though it may be delayed long enough for the hunters to spear it. Antelope is the game normally caught. The hunter carries the dead animal around his neck back to the camp for division. [483]
If a larger animal, such as an okapi, is caught, it is cut up on the spot and carried back to the camp in the women's baskets. There all the meat is spread out and the division takes place

PLATE 26 ¹_A

PYGMY PHYSICAL TYPES, EPULU DISTRICT, CENTRAL ITURI

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[292] a. An Mbuti elder. Too old to be a successful hunter, he can be sure of food and shelter, provided by the younger generation of hunters, for as long as he lives. The genet skin hat is not a formal indication of status, but, effectively, only elders are likely to wear hats of any kind.

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[300]
[201] b. An Mbuti hunter, upon whom, together with his wife, falls the main burden of providing for young and old. He will address the elders as "mother" and "father," regardless of actual kinship considerations, and he will have toward them all the same obligations that he has toward his biological parents. The hand gesture, a snapping of the fingers onto the palm, is used in conversation as an indication of speed or sudden activity.

1, /Plate 26 appears on page 285--Analyst/

[P 284]

1: Turnbull E-4.5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pvgmies FO4
Mbuti

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/Plate 26-B/

/Caption appears on p. 284/
[P 285-B]

GOVERNMENT: INTERNAL

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When Njobo was away from the band for a number of months with his son, these two nephews moved in. Normally they were not resident. Asuku brought not only his wife but also his father. He insisted on Njobo's wife looking after them, building their hut and so forth. Although Asuku was not liked, he would have been tolerated had he not tried to assume the status of Njobo, but this assumption moved him into an age group to which he did not belong, and he was consequently always being shouted down.

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On one such occasion, Asuku was annoyed at the hunt for not leaving as soon as he would have liked. He strode up and down, telling everyone that they were lazy. When they shouted him down, he told them he was Njobo's son, so "I am Njobo, and this is Njobo's camp." When he was ignored he then turned from one great hunter to the other, and they all ignored him except one, who placed a stick on the ground at Asuku's feet and said, "There is a stick; if you are so big, pick it up and hit me." Asuku then turned to the elders, and Moké, the most influential of all, laughed in his face. At this, Asuku entered his hut and stayed inside for the whole day until dark.

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On another occasion Asuku tried to say that his net was Njobo's net, and he was therefore entitled to Njobo's position in the hunt and should not be out on the fringes. He had chosen a time when his mother, Njobo's sister, was visiting, and the hunters did not want to make a dispute of the matter in front of her, out of respect for Njobo. However, one of them, Njobo's paternal cousin Manyalibo, went up to Asuku and said that if Asuku wanted that position it would mean setting his net next to him, and if that happened he would set up his net alone rather than stay in the hunt. This temporarily checked Asuku, and that evening old Moké gathered the senior hunters around him and, for once not smiling, he raised his arm and pointed across the camp to Asuku. This is considered a grave indictment, and the whole camp fell silent. Moké, very quietly, and talking as if only to the hunters but never lowering his arm or taking his eyes off Asuku, said, "That is a completely bad man. I have been watching and I have seen with my eyes, and my spirit [roho] makes me speak. He makes noise all the time, and he is the cause of all the noise in the camp. I would like to throw him out forever. But he is a relative of Njobo, and we should wait and see—and watch. That person is a child and has no right to share conversation with men. He is not of us. He comes from far off. I don't like people from far off. They are bad for any camp; they kill any camp completely." He then changed his attention and pointed at Ekianga, the other hunter of

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WAYWARD SERVANTS

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renown, the man with a troublesome trio of wives, himself a frequent cause of friction in the camp. Shaking his finger at Ekianga, Moké said, "And that is a man, completely clean. He pleases my spirit [roho] very much."

After the evening meal Moké stood in the middle of the camp and pointed to the hearth of each great hunter and male elder in turn, naming them, and saying, "This is my man, this is my hearth, for it is his hearth; but it is not Asuku's." He even pointed over to Cephu's camp, and included Cephu. He then went back to his hut, leaving Asuku at the central fire with two elders.

Despite this display of disaffection, however, Asuku remained on. He had not only been pointed at, but named in public, and another had been named as good while he had been named as bad—a double disgrace. Ridicule, after this, was pointless, and although everyone wanted to be rid of Asuku, their respect for Njobo, coupled with Njobo's continued absence, prevented them from doing more than ignoring the offender as far as possible. After some three months, however, Asuku began to frequent the village for long periods. Although this meant he was at least not in the camp, which was thereby much improved, the hunters found this the ultimate insult and disloyalty. When he refused a summons to return to the hunting camp, old Moké once again stood in midcamp, an honored position from which any Mbuti, young or old, is free to claim the attention of everyone. He said that since now Asuku had become a villager, he was no longer an Mbuti, no longer "ours"; he belonged far away, very far away indeed. Pointing to the central fire in the section of the camp that included Njobo's wife and three great hunters, and divers others both related and unrelated, he said, "This is a matter of the forest. This is our hearth. It is Njobo's hearth. It is not Asuku's hearth. He belongs in the village or completely and absolutely far away."

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Agreement

was unanimous, though subdued, and Moké simply said,

"Asi-to"—"It is finished." The next day word was sent by a youth to

[202] Asuku's father, in the territory of Effundi Somali, a few miles on the

far side of the Epulu. I was told that the youth simply gave a ver-

batim account of what had happened. Asuku never returned to the

Epulu band, and left the village, returning to his father's territory.

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His cousin, Mbaaka, was not such a stranger in the band, but soon after his marriage, and some six months after the Asuku episode, he

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Everyone agreed

WAYWARD SERVANTS

that after giving birth a woman should be left alone for a while, and that her belly should not become big again until her child became big.

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One of the many fights that occurred because of this relationship is described in *The Forest People* (Turnbull, 1961), at the end of Chapter 6. There it is seen that Amabosu sided with his sister, and consequently shared what everyone agreed was at least partly her guilt. Arobanai and Amabosu's mother, Sau, were the two who intervened to stop the fight when it began to get beyond bounds.

Amabosu, who intervened to help his sister, now found himself associated with her in her obstinate disregard of public opinion, so he ignored her and contented himself with continuing, from time to time, to make uncomplimentary remarks about her husband. This created a strain between Amabosu and his wife, Ekianga's sister, and while Sau became the protectress of her daughter-in-law, Arobanai became the protectress of her young co-wife.

One night Arobanai grumbled loud and long throughout the small hours until, about an hour before dawn, she came out into midcamp and woke everyone up with a torrent of abuse that was delivered with such vigor and evident sincerity that men came tumbling out of their huts holding their spears, ready for a large-scale fight. Arobanai had named just about everyone in the camp for some kind of offense, all of which contributed, she said, to Ekianga's delinquency. To emphasize her points she clapped her hands each time and pointed.

[522]

Masisi tried to quiet her down by imitating her and laughing at her, but all but a few were too sleepy to see much humor in the situation, and when he saw he was not achieving anything he abruptly told Arobanai to "close her teeth" and then walked away. Ekianga came out of his hut and also quietly tried to pacify his irate wife, but was equally unsuccessful. Others tried similarly and made equally little impression. Sleep was impossible, and everyone sat around huddled over their family hearth, cold and miserable, listening to the still undiminished flow of invective. Occasionally a finely turned phrase brought some nervous laughter, but on the whole Arobanai was not going after dramatic effect, she was merely cataloguing all the disturbances of the past few months and laying them at her husband's door. After over an hour of nonstop tirade Arobanai began to wind up her argument with an indictment of both Kamaikan and Amabosu. Kamaikan could have resisted Ekianga's attentions, she said, and she added that she had resisted them often enough herself. But Kamaikan

ful analysis by competent musicologists.⁶ As described, the above 533
divisions represent divisions recognized by the Mbuti, and visible in
differences of musical form. There is sometimes an additional cate- 533
gory stated, that of the elephant-hunting song, which seems to overlap 224
both the ordinary hunting song (specifically referred to by the Eplu
Mbuti as a net-hunting song) and the *molimo* song. In view of the [825]
possible elephant symbolism in the *molimo* festival, this could be of [765]
importance, though not enough is known at the moment of the ele-
phant-hunting song to properly assess its position in the system. In
this respect it should also be remembered that the Ngwana term
esumba, or *lusumba*, frequently used by the Mbuti in the forest con-
text as synonymous with their *molimo*, was originally for the
Ngwana in the nature of elephant-hunting magic.

All songs share the same essential nature, sharing the same power 533
of sound. The sound "awakens" the forest, in Mbuti terminology, 822
and the nature of the song indicates the particular area of interest of 778
the Mbuti at that moment, thus attracting the forest's attention to
the immediate needs of its children. It is also of the essential nature
of all songs that they should be "pleasing to the forest."

Rather more magical in nature, perhaps, is the way the Mbuti use 822
other forms of sound than song. A sudden noise of any kind is con- [201] •
sidered "strong," and generally bad; an isolated hand or arm clap, or
a single loud shout, will bring complete silence to a camp or to a hunt. [198]
Whistling is considered very "strong" indeed, but here the word [192]

⁶ It is interesting to note here the elephant-hunting significance of the Ngwana
esumba ritual, and the linguistic confusion between *esumba* and *molimo*. Frequently,
I have seen in the forest the remains of what seems like the model of a spear-fall, and
have always been told that a *molimo* had been held there. Most often such sites were in
old, deserted camps, once or twice (particularly in archer territory) on the trail. [765]

⁷ Pahlen (1949) gives an excellent general background to the primitive concept and
use of music, though his acceptance of the sounds of nature as symbols of supernatural
powers is not demonstrated. He points out (p. 18) how in ancient cultures music went
hand in hand with religion, "the synthesis of wisdom, beauty, kindness and solace." He
is referring primarily to countries with "highly developed cultures," but much of what
he says is applicable to primitive society. It is certain that an acute analysis of Mbuti
music would reveal much that parallels the structure of Mbuti society. The extraordinary
level of polyphonic achievement is surely related to a highly developed individualism
that would hardly tolerate the confines of unison. The Mbuti musical categories of *berai*
and *imiai*, chorus and solo song, indicate a system of recognized relationships between
the group and the individual, and the technique of *hoquet*, already mentioned, further
mirrors social relationships. Such considerations, however, should not obscure Pahlen's
major point that music also mirrors social values. It is an analytical tool, requiring little
musical training, that has been much neglected by anthropologists, and it is hoped that
a systematic analysis of Mbuti music now being undertaken at Columbia University will
provide data from which not only may further light be shed on Mbuti society, but from
which may emerge the beginnings of an ethno-musicological methodology.

RELIGION

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"to call the bees" (in the sense of attracting their attention, not of summoning them). The belief is that these whistles will halt the game or the bees, so that they may be found more easily.

All such whistling, whether by lip or by *piki*, is done by men. Women rarely whistle, though they may do so to the same end as the men. If they do, it is considered all the more *mota*.

It could easily be explained by the Mbuti that the sound itself paralyzes the animals or the bees, and has this direct effect (and could so be more properly called magical), but they deny this strongly and say that the forest hears the *piki* and leads them to the bees or the game (or alternatively that the forest holds the bees and the game still for its children to find them).

In ordinary conversation, sounds are widely used to convey different ideas, a snap of the fingers indicating that the action being described was done suddenly, a high-pitched, drawn-out exhalation indicating it was done slowly. Wherever possible, the narrative is illustrated by imitations of the sound of the action described. Vowel sounds, unformed into words, are used in conversation similarly to heighten ideas, convey added emotion, to supply an element that would otherwise be missing and which is plainly of great importance to the Mbuti. For the forest is nearly always full of sound, and the Mbuti refer to this constant background by saying "the forest is talking" (*ndura a lufu*). The Mbuti listen, and interpret, and make use of what they hear. If the forest stops "talking," then it is a sign that something is very wrong and alerts the Mbuti to imminent danger.

It is not surprising, then, that sound so carefully controlled as song should be considered as *mota nengo*, *mota ngbekbekbei*, the "strongest" possible kind of sound, activated by the breath that is so mysteriously connected with *pepo*. Song is used to communicate with the forest, and it is significant that the emphasis is on the actual sound, not on the words. Frequently the mere vowel sounds are used, sometimes imitative of animals, birds or bees but more often simply to suit the melodic line of the song. When words are used they are most often trivial, and may be spontaneous and highly sketchy references to one or another event of the day. That the song is directed at the forest, and intended to awaken the forest, is most clearly seen in the *molimo* festivals, which are the Mbuti reaction to crisis. The *molimo* is named for the festival, for the society that performs the festival, and for the central and solitary piece of paraphernalia, the trumpet that echoes the song of the Mbuti on into the depths of the forest.

THE FOREST PEOPLE

000 village at all costs. Rather to my surprise this struck the Pygmies as
P being funny, and they began sniggering. Kenge, carefully dusting
764 the last specks of earth from his spotless shorts, pretended to be
197 severe and said this was no time for laughter. He then promptly
522 cracked a joke at the expense of the Negroes and joined his friends
P in howls of mirth. When Pygmies laugh it is hard not to be af-
• [201] fected; they hold onto one another as if for support, slap their sides,
snap their fingers, and go through all manner of physical contortions.
If something strikes them as particularly funny they will even roll on
the ground, but this time the disapproving looks they got from the
Negroes discouraged them.

C The Negroes, having restored order, went on to the business of
761 settling who was responsible for the death of the child. To them no
764 death is natural; some evil spirit, some witch or sorcerer, had cursed
the girl with dysentery and made her die. They tried to find out
who had been fighting in Cephu's camp, who were the enemies of
the girl's family. Their concern was a real one, for if the witch was
P not found, it might strike at them next. But the Pygmies were not
[761] co-operative. They were bored and listless. The girl had died and
[197] that was that. The Negroes finally gave up and we all returned,
washing from head to foot as we crossed over the Nepussi.

P Back in the main camp everything was normal. Only in Cephu's
765 little camp was there quiet, subdued wailing from the house of the
child's parents. There was some discussion as to whether or not the
molimo should be called out. Cephu said in an aggressive manner
that it should be, the only trouble being that he didn't have one.
Certain families own them; others do not but when in need can
borrow them from relatives. Cephu promptly called on Njobo, who
reluctantly agreed.

That night, after the evening meal, a small number of men from
the main camp went over to Cephu's camp and sat down around
the central fire. The women and children were in their huts; some

THE FOREST PEOPLE

765 long trumpet, with Madyadya holding the front on his shoulder,
534 pointing it over the river toward the camp. Once again the night
765 was shattered as though there were a whole herd of elephants trumpet-
534 ing shrilly all around us. When the echoes died away, the camp
533 across the river had fallen silent. Ausu blew into the trumpet again,
825 and this time it was as if a leopard were growling angrily nearby.

- [201] One of the youths clapped himself under the armpit, as Pygmies frequently do, and said to himself, "That is its voice, just exactly." He clapped himself again with delight, and gave a little growl of his own.

765 Little more than a minute had passed when Amabosu, the great
533 singer, appeared from the shadows below us. He looked at us without
156 saying anything, without smiling or making any greeting. His eyes
781 had the strange look they often took on when he was singing or
534 playing the drums in a dance in the village. They seemed to be seeing something quite different from what was going on in front of them. He went up to Ausu and took the molimo from him and
[825] gently filled the forest with strange sounds—the rumblings and growls of buffalos and leopards, the mighty call of the elephant, the plaintive cooing of the dove. Interspersed were snatches of song, transformed by the trumpet into a sound quite unlike the song of men—richer, softer, more distant and unapproachable.

765 He continued blowing as we moved off, down the slope and to
534 the bank of the river, but when we plunged into the water and
123 waded across, the two trumpets left us and were carried upstream.
[533] They growled and bellowed somewhere behind us as we made our
765 way along the path to the camp. In the clearing the men were stand-
562 ing up to see us arrive, and the women were hurrying about doing what they had to do before shutting themselves up in their huts. The voice of the molimo had warned them that it was time to retire. The
[858] children had all been chased inside. One by one leaf doors were

THE CRIME OF CEPHU

of protest that not even Cephu would do such a thing. There was much shaking of heads, and when Ekianga arrived and was told what had happened he stood still for a moment, then turned around, looking in all directions to see if there was any sign of smoke from another fire. He said just one word, "Cephu," and spat on the ground. [201] •

By the time we got to the place where we were to make our first cast of the nets everyone was more silent and miserable than ever. It did not make matters any better to find Cephu there already, contentedly sitting over a fire eating roast plantains. He looked up and greeted us in a friendly way, and when asked why he had followed his own path he opened his eyes wide and softly said that he had misunderstood and taken the wrong trail. There were angry remarks, but Cephu ignored them all and went on munching at his plantain, smiling at everyone in his kind, gentle way. [242]

Ekianga and a few others made a brief reconnaissance, and when they came back they gave instructions as to the best direction for setting up the nets. The womenfolk, who had been foraging around for mushrooms and nuts, picked up their baskets and went ahead with the small children. They trod lightly and made no noise beyond an occasional crunch of a rotten branch, buried deep beneath the carpet of leaves. We all spread out in a long semicircle, each man knowing exactly who should be to his right and who to his left. I went with Maipe, who had been sent by Njobo with his net. We soon lost sight and sound of the others, but Maipe knew just where he would be expected to set up his net, and he took a short cut. I lost all sense of direction and could not even tell on which side of us the women were waiting for the signal to beat in toward our nets. We followed a little stream and paused by an enormous outcrop of huge stone boulders, almost perfectly square in shape, some of them eight feet across each face. Maipe looked around, then sat down to wait. After a few minutes Moke's nephew appeared to our left, stringing his net out through the undergrowth as he came. 224

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224 emptied. Then each of the other huts was searched and all the meat
156 taken. Cephu's family protested loudly and Cephu tried hard to
558 cry, but this time it was forced and everyone laughed at him. He
626 clutched his stomach and said he would die; die because he was
hungry and his brothers had taken away all his food; die because he
was not respected.

765 The kumamolimo was festive once again, and the camp seemed
621 restored to good spirits. An hour later, when it was dark and fires
264 were flickering outside every hut, there was a great blaze at the
central hearth and the men talked about the morrow's hunt. From
• [201] Cephu's camp came the sound of the old man, still trying hard to
cry, moaning about his unfortunate situation, making noises that
were meant to indicate hunger. From our own camp came the jeers
of women, ridiculing him and imitating his moans.

[602] When Masisi had finished his meal he took a pot full of meat
with mushroom sauce, cooked by his wife, and quietly slipped away
into the shadows in the direction of his unhappy kinsman. The moan-
ing stopped, and when the evening molimo singing was at its height

[516] I saw Cephu in our midst. Like most of us he was sitting on the
[829] ground, in the manner of an animal. But he was singing, and that
meant that he was just as much a BaMbuti as anyone else.

THE PLAY WORLD OF THE BAMBUTI

husband, and the final step, if he did not stop her, was for her to pack her few belongings and walk off, having completely demolished their home first. Then she would return to the home of her parents. It is the nature of a Pygmy never to admit he is wrong, and the husband was beginning to feel equally anxious. Things had gone too far for either of them to patch up the quarrel without being shamed in the eyes of all those who were watching to see what would happen next. He sat silent, hugging his knees, looking as miserable as his wife. Then he brightened up suddenly and turned around to see how far the demolition had gone. Only a few sticks had been pulled out. He called to his wife not to bother with the sticks, it was only the leaves that were dirty. She looked at him with a puzzled "Ayiiiiii?"—and then, understanding, asked him to help her carry the leaves down to the stream. This they did, and together they gravely washed every single leaf and brought them back. While she joyfully put the leaves back on the hut he stoked up the fire and then went off with his bow and arrows to see if he could find some game to bring back for a special dinner. [201] •

The pretense was that she had been taking the leaves off not because she was angry, but because they were dirty and attracted ants and spiders. Nobody believed this, but everyone was glad the quarrel was over. For several days women talked politely about the insects in the leaves of their huts, and took a few leaves down to the stream to wash, as if this was a perfectly normal procedure. I have never seen it done before or since.

But apart from little excitements of this kind during the day, the camp really comes to life only when the hunt returns. Long before the first hunter appears the whole camp knows exactly who has caught what. They know partly by listening for the shouts and arm-claps of the returning hunters, which they can hear from a considerable distance, and partly because throughout the day children come and